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Sudden realization in the lift down from his Dresden studio apartment (manufactured by Schindler's Lifts, no less) that the only way to write this for the screen is with the ordered, alphabeastic indifference of seventies' Strukturalismus, that is *après R.B.*

- Sonnabend 28 August 1999 20h00 Dresden

Bruit; aucun bruit

Silence, tranquility, almost impossible to find when completely alone in the city. Solitariness heightens awareness of the noise of others. Constant quest then to find silence, seeking out the quietest corner of the restaurant, gauging the brutishness of groups in a bar, choosing a hotel room carefully with no noisy neighbour, especially not one upstairs. The worst agony is the noisy occupant of the apartment above. Always in shoes on bare floorboards. Adjectives cannot begin to accommodate the anguish.

Ces choses, mes carnets

Singular mark of social class to use the plural noun, *things* when unsure of the exact collective term for that which is currently under discussion. In my notebooks a change from cries for help to that of a fixed and thoughtful stare on the world; each instance of, *thing*, carefully reworked.

On est dedans

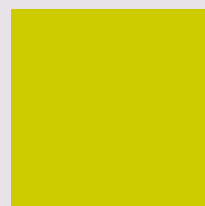
We are inside. The great factory, Kaplan's great factory of excess contains us, breathes for us. We are within. *On est dedans*, like the rythmical sound of steel wheels on railway track, *on est dedans*. We are within its lifts, within its rooms, within its web. We are the machine. It walls us.

Il s'échappait en esprit

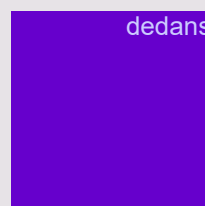
From time to time he looked out of the window at the distant hills beyond the city. For a few moments he used to escape in spirit from the machine. For as long as he can remember in his working life, from sometime in the mid-seventies right through into this new century he would stand, rest his hand on top of the visual display unit, more recently called 'the monitor', and gaze out through the sealed window units. No longer cries for help, simply a fixed and thoughtful stare on the world. Interestingly, in that same period of time, the last quarter of the old twentieth century, the German word for computer (subject of his translations) changed from Rechner to Komputer and then back to Rechner.

Les fruits mûrissent partout

Taking himself from the land, the fruits of his labours move nothing, they harvest nothing. His work, a day of struggle, a year's toil only result in minor adjustments to the orbits of electrons; the disc weighs no more nor any less than before

A**B**

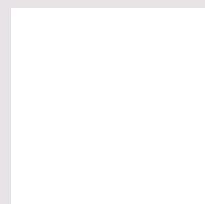
dedans

**C**

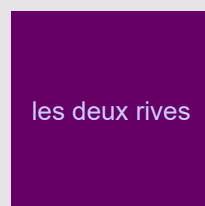
au-dessous

**D**

dehors

**E**

les deux rives



the work. Over the Internet his work may be anywhere in the world, unknown to him, his minor adjustments are being read.

Je gère

I manage. I manage the disturbances of life. I manage to work. I manage a team. I manage to wake up.

HTML

The hypertext markup language, he discovers it in the last decade of the old century. Hears it initially pronounced in French, ash tay em ell. Meaningless. HTML provides the perfect frame for language. Rather than addressing the issue that we have inherited a medieval artefact, called the written English language, HTML offers up a controlling, ordering tool for it. It encapsulates it with its tables. It lets us lay out the ancient body of language on the stark operating table. Illuminated and brightly coloured but removed from the copyist's vellum made from the organic flesh of beasts.

C'est « its »

Possessed by the apostrophe, even obsessed with the distinction between it's and its. Say it's the same sound as its. Mais *its*, c'est son.

Le jarret, la nuque

Fascinated by the untranslatable discoveries in a neighbouring language, especially places of mystery. Places that are too secret for Anglo-Saxons to learn of their existence. Invisible places where perfume is applied or one expects to be kissed. Always behind, never obvious, never crying out to be named: le jarret, la nuque.

Un kilogramme, un quintal

Hidden within the cool, sleek, efficient modernity of the metric system is our quest for the medieval body. The twelve-fingered one. The third, impossible division of the decimal. We bend the unyielding concrete of the metric system in an attempt to break out with archaic multiples, a dozen metres, a quintal of kilos, a quarter of a kilo. No ells, hands, no rods, poles nor chains. No more furlongs, fugitive arbiters of our space, fled forever.

La langue écrite est différente

The written language, the work, the piece of literature has its own space in which to work out its message. Patterns emerge, certain sections refer back to ideas sewn at the start of the writing. The literary text speaks with a range of voices. By the end, or after a re-reading, that which is left in the reader's thoughts is a complex. Perhaps later connections are seen which continue to reveal the work, illuminating the manuscript days or even weeks afterwards.

La médiation

Mediation of authority, an economics of writing. Writing the self oscillates between using an existing formula that is recognizable and, thus, authoritative whilst inserting sufficient newness, that is unique to the self, without tipping

F



G



H



I



J



K



the balance by making the whole text so novel that it becomes unreadable, thus losing its authority.

Le nom

That which he names is of the earth. His own name he questions, mutates first and last, returns, and is finally gripped and held by it. Names of others have no weight; they do not hold. Since they find no meaning in the structured frame of linguistic sense they cannot be stored anywhere. Names are truly Saussurean, they are merely different from one another, they are indifferent to that which they signify and they mean nothing.

Le sens obtus

« ...je propose de l'appeler le sens obtus. » Barthes.
She makes a science out of her obtuse nature. Always finding another meaning from the one intended by the speaker she supplements the quotidian, enriching it with a constant challenge. The sum of these fleeting moments constructs an adventure which is a surfeit, an excess of it.

La poésie

Lyotard asks, where is the space for poetry. In his life poetic discourse shifts from pleasurable to problematic. Creating, owning, owning up to poetry is dangerous; it earns nothing, it destabilises the order of language and hence it challenges other forms of written discourse. We are inside the discourse of written forms of language which secure the order of contemporary society. Poetry pushes at the boundaries, tries to exit from the frame.

Quelquefois

Sometimes the addition of adverbs seems excessive. Qualifying the verb seems too poetic for formal writing, for reports, for critical writing. This quest for style summed up simply by saying, use only those words which are appropriate. The distribution of power renders appropriation of language impossible.

Je rappe comme je parle

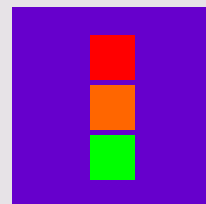
«... les rimes viennent en parlant avec les gens. Je rappe comme je parle. » Oxmo Puccino.
They fear death yet they will never know their own so they speak with one another. From time to time out of this talking comes rhyme or reason. No difference, both reassure.

Quel style cherchez-vous ?

This quest for style led him into every bookshop around the Sorbonne and down the boulevards of the Left Bank. All along the rive gauche the bouquinistes gave the same answer, yes, they knew of Barthes' *L'empire des signes* from 1970 but no longer had a copy nor could they remember the publishers, *Skira*. In writing, the search for the perfect style takes him on the same journey, never reaching a destination, the unsatisfied quest is contained even in literary imagery. The simile, the metaphor are themselves unrequited, thou art as a rose, tu es pareille à la rose.

La tentation de l'essayisme

L



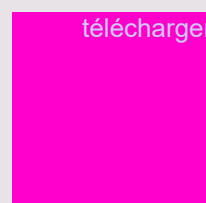
M



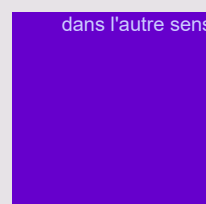
N



O



P



Q

The theoretical text surplants the fictional. There was a time in the last century when the essay was more highly valued than the story it analysed. The essay made the story's myths unfamiliar; it challenged the readers' assumptions, making readers aware of their own thinking, their own behaviours in response to that other text under discussion.

Une intégration qui va jusqu'à l'urbanisme

Alain Cottet, director of Montpellier's Méditerranée Technopole, explains in *Le Monde* his choice of the feminine gender for his new technopolis « Nous voulions souligner l'intégration dans la cité, une intégration qui va jusqu'à l'urbanisme ». The new century embraces cyberspace, seeking to enclose and include it within the walls of the medieval space, la cité. In the 19th century the huge staircase from the gare Saint-Charles was Marseilles' entrance through the walls of the cité, in the 20th century the distant airport, and now, in the 21st, the remote computer screen. The far-off will integrate us.

Vouloir, la valeur

The web constantly presents a myriad of utterances to which she applies her values as a way of discriminating among them. She chooses which lexia to make meaning from. She may ignore them or respond to them. Even the choice to ignore is a choice, a discrimination, an application of value, a demonstration of will and existence.

Il prend le wagon-lit

He takes the sleeper back from Berlin. Thirteen long hours through the November night, the guard offers red wine, bread and cheese, then later, strong coffee. Heading west again to start a new line of text on the left-hand side of the map of Europe.

Monsieur X

He checks into the Paris hotel he had booked earlier by telephone, confident, assured. No reservation has been made in his name. « Ah vous êtes M. X! »

Y, on y va

Modern French could manage without this ancient letter, Greek eye watching from antiquity, les yeux grecs. Barely a handful of words begin with it, those that do are Turkish yogourt, English yard, Tibetan yak, Sanskrit yogi or Japanese yen. Except that the language betrays itself, y, the Latin pronoun, ibi, indicating the place where we are going, that other space we wish to occupy. The ubiquitous French y undigested since Roman times.

Zoologie

He remembers the humorous pedantry of his Latin master thirty years later, two martini, one martinus, Madge-orca not my-orca, Bay-djing not Bye-sching, co-op not coup, zoh-ology, not zoo-ology. E lapide not ex lapide, different from not different to. Stored in the ark of his mind these paired beasts seem to appear again and again of their own volition.

en avant

R

passez devant

S

dedans

T

dedans

U

dedans

V

dedans

[^ top ^](#)

W

dedans

X

rien ne va plus

Y

enfin

Z

au
rez-de-
chaussée

Author: Charlie Mansfield

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